

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
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O R 101613Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8470
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: ELECTIONS 1978: THE LEFT MOVES CAUTIOUSLY
TOWARD RAPPROCHEMENT

SUMMARY. ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS, COMMUNIST (PCF) AND SOCIALIST (PS) MANEUVERING IS NOW LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR AT LEAST TEMPORARY RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO ROUNDS. BOTH PARTIES AGREED MARCH 9 THAT A SUMMIT SESSION WOULD BE DESIRABLE ON MARCH 13 OR 14 IN ORDER TO HAMMER OUT EITHER A "POLITICAL ACCORD" (PC/) OR A "DECLARATION OF COMMON POLICY" (PS). THERE ARE ALSO RELIABLE REPORTS THAT COMMUNIST LEADER MARCHAIS HAS ALREADY TAKEN THE DECISION TO ANNOUNCE PCF ELECTORAL COOPERATION (DESISTEMENT) ON SUNDAY NIGHT. AT THE SAME TIME, IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES STILL EXIST BETWEEN SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST CONCEPTIONS OF BOTH NEGOTIATING GOALS AND PROCESS, WHICH MEANS THAT BARGAINING WOULD BE TOUGH AND COULD BE DRAWN OUT BEYOND MARCH 14. IN ANY CASE, LAST-MINUTE MOMENTUM SEEMS TO BE MOVING IN FAVOR OF RECONCILIATION, ALBEIT TACTICAL AND ELECTORAL. END SUMMARY.

1. LEFT SUMMIT MARCH 13?: AS THE PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN DRAWS TO A CLOSE, BOTH COMMUNISTS (PCF) AND SOCIALISTS (PS) CONTINUE THE GRADUAL RAPPROCHEMENT BEGUN IN MID-FEBRUARY EMPLOYING VARYING EUPHEMISMS OF "POLITICAL ACCORD" AND "DECLARATION OF COMMON POLICY" (PARIS 7660). BOTH SIDES HAVE SINCE STUCK WITH THE SAME GENERAL THEM, BUT HAVE NOW ADDED THE ELEMENT OF TIMING -- PS AND PCF SPOKESMEN AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO THE CONCEPT OF A "SUM-CONFIDENTIAL

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MIT" SESSION ON MARCH 13 OR 14 IN ORDER TO TRY TO REACH AGREEMENT ON SOME FORM OF ACCORD.

2. TWO DEFINITIONS OF AGREEMENT: IN ACCEPTING THE CONCEPT OF A SUMMIT, PCF SPOKESMAN CHARLES FITERMAN SAID MARCH 9 THAT SUCH A SESSION SHOULD CONCERN "A GOOD AGREEMENT ON THE PROGRAM, I.E., ON THE OBJECTIVES AND MEANS OF THE COMMON POLICY, ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND ON DESISTEMENT (STEPPING DOWN ON THE SECOND ROUND)". FOR THE SOCIALISTS, CLAUDE ESTIER REAFFIRMED MARCH 9 PS WILLINGNESS TO HOLD A SUMMIT SESSION, PROVIDED THE PCF HAS FIRST AGREED TO DESISTEMENT. A "COMMON DECLARATION" COULD THEN FOLLOW, SPECIFYING "PRECISE ENGAGEMENTS ON THE NATURE OF A LEFT GOVERNMENT AND THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WOULD IMMEDIATELY IMPLEMENT."

3. CLOSE, BUT WORLDS APART: THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY SERIOUS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO CONCEPTS, EVEN THOUGH THE TERMINOLOGY IS CONVERGING:

-- THE PCF BEGINS WITH THE PROGRAM, THEN MOVES ON TO THE GOVERNMENT AND DESISTEMENT; THE PS CON-

TINUES TO MAKE DESISTEMENT A PRE-CONDITION FOR
ANY DISCUSSION ON EITHER THE PROGRAM OR THE
GOVERNMENT.

-- FITERMAN SPECIFIES "OBJECTIVES AND MEANS", THE
LATTER TERM BEING THE PCF CODEWORD FOR NATIO-
NALIZATIONS. THE IMPLICATION IS THAT THE COM-
MUNISTS EXPECT SOME HARD BARGAINING TO OCCUR
MARCH 13, SOMETHING WHICH MITTERRAND HAS THUS
FAR REJECTED COMPLETELY IN CHARACTERIZING HIS

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PROPOSED DECLARATION AS A REITERATION OF THE
"GRAND OPTIONS" ALREADY AGREED TO IN 1972.

ONE MUST CONCLUDE THAT WHILE THE GROUNDWORK FOR RECONCILIATION HAS BEEN LAID, THERE ARE STILL IMPORTANT GAPS BETWEEN THE RESPECTIVE POSITIONS WHICH WILL APPARENTLY REQUIRE A MAJOR CONCESSION ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER, OR BOTH.

4. THE KRIEGEL THEORY: SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THESE GAPS ARE TOO FUNDAMENTAL TO BE FILLED AND THAT LEFT REUNION IS NOT IN THE CARDS. EMBOFFS LUNCHEON MARCH 9 WITH JOURNALIST AND PCF WATCHER ANNIE KRIEGEL WHO FEELS THAT NEITHER SIDE WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CONCESSIONS AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS WILL SIMPLY DRAG OUT THROUGH MARCH 18 WITH NO COMPROMISE (EVEN THOUGH SECOND-ROUND CANDIDATES MUST BE REGISTERED BY MIDNIGHT MARCH 14, CANDIDATES CAN WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME -- THUS DESISTEMENT COULD TECHNICALLY BE IMPLEMENTED AT THE VERY LAST MOMENT). FOLLOWING KRIEGEL'S SCENARIO, THE LEFT WILL FINALLY ARRIVE AT THE SAME IMPASSE AS LAST SEPTEMBER, THUS LOSING THE SECOND ROUND, EVEN THOUGH A NUMBER OF DESISTEMENTS WILL BE ARRANGED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

5. THE KEYS TO VICTORY: REGARDLESS OF WHICH SCENARIO IS CHOSEN, HOWEVER, MITTERRAND'S COMMENT OF LAST WINTER REMAINS VALID: THE COMMUNISTS DO APPEAR TO HOLD THE KEYS TO LEFT VICTORY. THEIR STRATEGY IS NEBULOUS FOR THE MOMENT, BUT WILL CLEARLY BE INFLUENCED BY THEIR ELECTORAL SCORE ON MARCH 12, THE GAP BETWEEN PC/ AND PS STRENGTH AND AT LEAST SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE PART OF MITTERRAND. TO MAKE ITS DECISION, THE PCF HAS ALREADY
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ANNOUNCED THAT GEORGES MARCHAIS WILL HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE AT 10:30 P.M. ON MARCH 12 IN THE PRESENCE OF THE POLITBURO AND THAT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL MEET ON MONDAY, MARCH 13 AT 10:00 A.M. THE SOCIALIST NATIONAL

SECRETARIAT WILL CONVENE THE MORNING OF MARCH 13, FOLLOWED BY A DIRECTING COMMITTEE MEETING AT 1:00 P.M. THE LEFT RADICALS (MRG) WILL HOLD A MEETING OF THEIR NATIONAL BUREAU AT 3:00 P.M. MARCH 13, AS WELL.

6. AMIDST ALL THIS MANEUVERING, THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IS PCF ANALYSIS OF THOSE FACTORS BEARING ON THE QUESTION OF DESISTEMENT. JOURNALISTIC RUMORS ABOUT THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE ALREADY REACHED A DECISION TO STEP DOWN ON THE SECOND ROUND. IMPORTANT PRESSURES CERTAINLY SEEM TO BE PUSHING THE PCF IN THAT DIRECTION (PARIS 6015), ALTHOUGH A DEFINITIVE CHOICE DOES NOT NEED TO BE MADE UNTIL AFTER THE FACTS ARE IN, I.E., UNTIL AFTER THE FIRST-ROUND RESULTS ARE MADE KNOWN SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 12. (ACCORDING TO ONE RELIABLE REPORT, MARCHAIS WILL ANNOUNCE PCF DESISTEMENT AT HIS SUNDAY NIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE). IF THE COMMUNISTS SHOULD DECIDE TO DELAY UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT, IT WILL BE TO USE THE DESISTEMENT ISSUE AS PRESSURE FOR Eeking OUT SOCIALIST CONCESSIONS OR AT LEAST FOR MOVING MITTERRAND TOWARD THE MINIMUM DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY NECESSARY FOR THE PCF TO SAVE FACE. MITTERRAND, HOWEVER, HAS DEMONSTRATED NO INCLINATION TO ENGAGE IN A DRAWN-OUT NEGOTIATING PROCESS, WHICH ARGUES FOR A FINAL SOLUTION SOON AFTER THE FIRST-ROUND RESULTS ARE KNOWN.
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